

WYCOMBE FAIL TO CRACK CITY BARRIER

MATCH DETAILS

Wycombe Wanderers: J. Maskell; L. Temel, S. Thompson, I. Rundle, C. Gale; B. Baker, D. Thomas, J. Lally; L. Worley, K. Samuels, A. Horseman. Sub.: V. Bushy.

St. Albans City: R. Whitenker; M. Harman, D. Lawrence, P. Wood, L. Burgess; D. Neville, W. Ratty, D. Gibbs; R. Childs, J. Butterfield, W. Broomfield. Sub.: J. Mann.

Corners — Wycombe 3, St. Albans 6.

Free-kicks (conceded) — Wycombe 4, St. Albans 10.

Referee — Mr. W. South (Uxbridge).

F.A. CUP
SPECIALS

'We did not play well as a team. Certainly St. Albans came here for a draw.'

—Barry Darvill,
Wycombe Wanderers' manager-coach



St. Albans goalkeeper, Whitenker, lies clutching the ball and his ribs following his brave save at the feet of Horseman. Also in the picture are Wanderers' captain, Keith Samuels.

Wycombe Wanderers 0, St. Albans City 0
UNLESS BOTH THESE sides are prepared to take a gamble in the forward department, Wycombe Wanderers and St. Albans City could still be locked in combat after Thursday night's replay at Clarence Park.

Both sides must gamble reports Patrick Vercoe

The one obvious factor to emerge from Saturday's F.A. Cup first qualifying round encounter at Loakes Park was the need for the forwards to wrest the initiative from close marking defenders.

As the home team, the onus was on Wanderers to carry the fight to St. Albans. This they did — first with a 4-3-3 formation and later on through a 4-2-4 system but neither tactical ploy managed to pierce a solid St. Albans defence.

While Wycombe dictated the tempo St. Albans defended stubbornly with disciplined and precise football, relying on the rare breakaway to cause consternation to the Wanderers' rearguard.

Up front, Wanderers were disappointed, lacking in any form

of cohesion and understanding. Every time they did threaten the commendable Wood always plugged the gaps and if he was not available then the excellent Whitenker used his safe pair of hands to snuff out the danger.

Run of play

However, while St. Albans deserved their draw, on the run of play Wanderers had enough clear-cut opportunities to make Thursday's journey unnecessary. Three of Wycombe's brightest chances fell to Keith

Samuels but it was not to be a captain's day.

For the opening 15 minutes the teams probed for possible weakness and even in this short space of time it soon became evident that something extra special would be required to break down the stranglehold grip applied by both defences.

After 20 minutes a suicidal pass-back by Worley nearly cost Wycombe dearly. Childs read the situation well and intercepted but fortunately his shot on the run was wide.

Wycombe replied swiftly as Whitenker was forced to make an inspired save at the feet of Samuels to prevent a certain score.

Wanderers' full-backs Loï Temel and Charlie Gale used the overlap movement intelligently. Gale had more opportunities to initiate raids because of St. Albans' 4-3-3 policy he was often left free without a man to mark.

From one of the Wanderers' two corners in the first 45 minutes Wycombe easily passed up the best scoring opening of the entire match.

Worley's kick was met by Horseman who headed down to Samuels but he failed to hook the ball into the net from three yards, allowing the relieved Whitenker to rescue his side.

Only on odd occasions had St. Albans allowed themselves the luxury of moving on to the offensive. Generally their attacks were confined to outside Wycombe's 18-yard box, thanks mainly to the no-nonsense tackling of Ian Rundle.

However, goalkeeper John Maskell had to be on the alert for danger. A minute before the break Ratty forsook his normal mid-field duties to go forward and fire in a scorching 20-yard drive which brought a superb flying save from Maskell, who did extremely well to keep possession, as Butterfield followed up.

Play in the second half deteriorated rapidly with the result that the football became disorganised and scrappy. St. Albans still kept the emphasis very much on defence leaving only two players lurking for the half chance. Some five minutes after the interval Childs was blatantly held in the penalty area by Maskell following a misunderstanding between the keeper and Temel.

While the St. Albans contingent in the crowd were howling for a penalty the referee, whose decisions at times often misfired everyone, awarded a free-kick in Wycombe's favour after consulting his linesman, who had previously given Childs offside.

Quiet Tony

Little was seen of Wycombe's ace striker, Tony Horseman. He was prominent in one good move when latching onto Worley's astute through pass. Horseman's curling shot was beautifully plucked down by Whitenker.

At this stage with Wanderers' workrate noticeably dropping they reverted to 4-2-4 with Julian Lailey coming back to operate the sweeper role with Stuart Thompson moving forward to join the front runners.

Whitenker pulled off a brave save at Horseman's feet following nice approach work between Worley and Thompson. The keeper fell awkwardly on Horseman's feet and could only continue after treatment to his ribs.

Just four minutes from time Worley made a determined run and whipped over a cross which Samuels nodded into the path of Horseman and his drive from five yards out looked to be on its way in until Wood appeared from nowhere to silence the goal-roar beginning to crescendo from the terraces.

Half Time 0-0